REMARKS

1. Claims 1-3, 10-14 and 19 have been amended in the present response. Claims 1-20 remain in the case.

2. Claims 1, 2 and 3 were objected to because of various informalities. The informalities are hereby corrected in the following manner:

In claim 1, in the step of "connecting" (formerly line 9), the word "a" has been changed to --the-- in front of the phrase "virtual conference" as suggested by the Examiner. Also, to enhance clarity, the word "establishing" has been changed to the phrase "setting up." Thus, the phrase "establishing a virtual conference" now reads --setting up the virtual conference--.

In claims 2 and 3, the definite article --the-- has been added in front of the phrase "virtual conference information" as suggested by the Examiner. Further, the phrase "a portion of" has been introduced in front of the article --the--. Thus, the phrase "retrieving virtual conference information" now reads --retrieving a portion of the virtual conference information--.

3. Claims 1 ,2, 4 and 9-13 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by Chang et al (US 6754323). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Claim 1 is directed to setting up a virtual conference call, whereby virtual reality technology is used to communicate virtual conference information among a plurality of virtual reality terminals dispersed among various locations. The virtual conference defines a communication forum in which participants although not physically present at the same location, can experience or at least approximate the sensation of actual presence in the same room. As will be appreciated, the degree to which the virtual conference can approximate the sensation of actual physical presence depends on the sophistication of virtual reality technology employed. Applicants claimed method, with the benefit of virtual reality terminals (for example and without limitation, virtual reality headgear), promises to approximate the sensation of physical presence closer than heretofore possible from less-sophisticated modalities (e.g., traditional audio or video teleconferencing services or PC-based remote communication services).

Claim 1 has been amended to more clearly recite a method for setting up a virtual conference call, as distinguished from other less-sophisticated conferencing modalities by reciting that the virtual conference defines a communication forum for communicating virtual conference information among a plurality of virtual reality terminals including the host terminal, the virtual conference information including one or more virtual images. For example and without limitation, the virtual conference information may comprise images associated with a selected meeting room (e.g., office, board room, auditorium or outdoor environment), color scheme, presentation media (e.g., chalkboard, whiteboard, wall charts, PowerPoint™ slides) and facial images. Support for the amendment and the original subject matter of claim 1 may be found, for example, at page 4, line 14 through page 6, line 12, which describes a communication system for providing a virtual conference service between virtual reality terminals and provides the above-noted examples of virtual images that may be communicated in a virtual conference.

Claim 1 has been amended further to include limitations relating to "filtering" the retrieved information and "supplementing" the retrieved information. For example and without limitation, with reference to page 8, lines 8-11, in the case where a facial image is obtained from a headset and partially obscured by the headset, the headset portion of the image may be filtered/removed and then supplemented or "filled in" to give the appearance of a complete facial image. The virtual conference information thus may comprise retrieved information, filtered information and/or supplemental information.

Chang et al. describes a manner of establishing a conference call from a call-log, wherein a service node establishes a conference call by calling prospective invitees indicated in the call log and invites them to join the conference by responding with a DTMF tone. The conference is described as "automatic" in the sense that the invitees need not know or call in to a predesignated contact number but rather join the conference responsive to receiving a call from the service node. To support the service, the service node obtains participant profile data including, for example, a participant identifier, participant address, current or preferred address, home address, wireless address and a computer address (the term address encompasses telephone numbers, IP addresses or other identifiers associated with prospective participants in the conference).

The Office Action suggests that the conference described in Chang et al. is a virtual conference and the information retrieved in Chang et al. defines virtual conference information. Respectfully, however, the conference described in Chang et al. is a traditional audio conference call, not a virtual conference call; and there is no teaching or suggestion that the conference described in Chang et al. utilizes virtual reality terminals that can receive virtual images. Neither does Chang teach or suggest filtering or supplementing images to form the virtual conference information.

Accordingly, amended claim 1 clearly distinguishes over Chang et al. since it is directed to setting up a virtual conference including an exchange of virtual conference information among virtual reality terminals, and wherein the virtual conference information is formed in part by filtering retrieved information and supplementing the retrieved or filtered information. Claims 2, 4 and 9-13 distinguish over Chang et al. for at least the reason that they depend from amended claim 1.

4. Claims 14 and 19 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Boyle et al (US 6421324). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Claims 14 and 19 are directed respectively, to a method and system operable to provide a virtual conference call service. As described in relation to amended claim 1, a virtual conference call service utilizes virtual reality technology to communicate virtual conference information including virtual images among a plurality of virtual reality terminals dispersed among various locations.

Claims 14 and 19 have been amended to more clearly recite a method and system, respectively, applicable to providing a virtual conference call service, as distinguished from other conferencing modalities, by reciting that the virtual conference comprises a host virtual reality terminal and one or more participating virtual reality terminals connected to a virtual conference bridge; and that virtual conference information communicated via the virtual conference bridge includes one or more virtual images. Claims 14 and 19 have further been amended to recite that the virtual images include images retrieved from one or more of: the host terminal, the one or more participating terminals and a virtual conference database; and one or more of images

derived by removing extraneous information from the retrieved images, defining filtered images; images derived by overwriting the retrieved images with supplemental information; and images derived by overwriting the filtered images with supplemental information.

Boyle et al. describes a roamer-originated automatic conference call service, wherein a "roamer" (i.e., a mobile phone that is outside of its home service area) can initiate a conference call that may include participants in different service areas. To support the service, a user predefines one or more conferencing groups, for example, by providing a list of directory numbers which are to be included in the respective groups. Thereafter, the user initates the conference call service by entering a feature code (e.g., "*88") and a subscriber group number (e.g., "01", "02", etc.). A switch 110 receives the incoming call, recognizes based on the feature code and subscriber group number that the user is requesting a conference call to a predefined group; and begins setting up call legs to the directory numbers of the appropriate group. Similarly to Chang et al., the conference is described as "automatic" in that invitees need not know or call in to a predesignated contact number but rather join the conference responsive to receiving a call from the switch 110.

The Office Action suggests that the conference described in Boyle et al. is a virtual conference and the directory numbers of the subscriber group defines virtual conference information. Respectfully, however, the conference described in Boyle et al. is a traditional audio conference call, not a virtual conference call; and there is no teaching or suggestion that the conference described in Boyle et al. can communicate virtual images. Neither does Boyle teach or suggest communicating virtual images formed in part by filtering retrieved images or supplementing retrieved or filtered images. Accordingly, amended claims 14 and 19 clearly distinguish over Boyle et al. for the reason that they refer to virtual reality terminals receiving virtual conference information including one or more virtual images, and that the virtual images can be formed in part by filtering retrieved images or supplementing retrieved or filtered images.

5. Claim 3 and 5-8 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Chang et al in view of McNerney et al. (US 5,999,208). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Claims 3 and 5-8 depend from amended claim 1 which has been shown to clearly distinguish over Chang et al. The secondary reference, McNerney et al. was considered to supply limitations missing from Chang et al. relating to sharing facial images of the host (claim 3), receiving indicia of options selected via the host terminal including a selected room type (claim 5), a selected outdoor environment (claim 6), a selected presentation medium (claim 7) and a selected meeting room facility (claim 8). Respectfully, however, even if Chang et al. and McNerney et al. could be combined, the combination does not supply limitations discussed in relation to amended claim 1, relating to setting up a virtual reality conference between virtual reality terminals or filtering or supplementing images to form virtual conference information.

McNerney et al. describes a PC-based application for portraying mixed-media conference participants on a PC screen in a "virtual reality mixed media meeting room." The meeting room is described as a "virtual reality" room in the sense that it emulates the appearance of a traditional conference room and can show images of participants and devices that would be present in a traditional conference room. However, it is noted, McNerney describes a relatively unsophisticated virtual reality modality. To the extent McNerney may be considered to display "virtual images," such images are merely displayed on a PC screen. McNerney does not contemplate a virtual reality experience such as applicants, that attempts to approximate the sensation of physical presence. Not surprisingly, McNerney does not contemplate filtering or supplementing images, for example, to modify a facial image that is partially obscured by a headset. Accordingly, even if McNerney can be combined with Chang, the combination does not disclose limitations of filtering or supplementing images to form virtual conference information as recited in amended claim 1. Claims 3 and 5-8 clearly distinguish over the combination of Chang and McNerney because they depend from amended claim 1.

6. Claims 15-18 and 20 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Boyle et al in view of McNerney et al. (US 5,999,208). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Claims 15-18 and 20 depend from amended claims 14 and 19 which have been shown to clearly distinguish over Boyle et al. The secondary reference, McNerney et al. was considered to supply limitations missing from Boyle et al. relating to communicating images of a selected room

type (claim 15), a selected outdoor environment (claim 16), a selected presentation medium (claim 17) and a selected meeting room facility (claim 18) or one or more of those images (claim 20). Respectfully, however, even if Boyle et al. and McNerney et al. could be combined, the combination does not supply limitations discussed in relation to amended claims 14 and 19, relating to virtual reality terminals receiving virtual conference information including one or more virtual images, and that the virtual images can be formed in part by filtering retrieved images or supplementing retrieved or filtered images.

As noted above, McNerney et al. describes a PC-based application for portraying mixed-media conference participants on a PC screen. To the extent McNerney may be considered to display "virtual images," McNerney does not contemplate filtering or supplementing virtual images, for example, to modify a facial image that is partially obscured by a headset. Accordingly, even if McNerney can be combined with Boyle, the combination does not disclose virtual images derived by filtering or supplementing virtual conference information as recited in amended claims 14 and 19. Claims 15-18 and 20 clearly distinguish over the combination of Boyle and McNerney because they depend from amended claims 14 and 19.

7. In view of the above amendments and remarks, a notice of allowance of claims 1-20 is respectfully requested. The Commissioner is authorized to charge any additional fees that may be required, or credit any overpayment, to Lucent Technologies Deposit Account No. 12-2325.

Respectfully submitted,

By: Steven R Santema

Steven R. Santema
Attorney for Applicants
Registration No. 40,156
Phone: (630) 979-7006

Date:

Send all correspondence to:

Docket Coordinator
Alcatel-Lucent
Room 2F-190
600-700 Mountain Ave.
Murray Hill, NJ 07974-0636